



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Agenda Item 12

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Memorandum

TO: Elderly & Disabled Advisory Committee DATE: April 24, 2008
FR: Tom Spiekerman
RE: 511 Transit Web site Trip Planner Replacement Update

This memo is an update to the previous report given to EDAC regarding new developments on the 511 Transit trip planner and Transit Web site.

511 Transit Program

Since 1997, MTC has contracted with bd Systems, Inc. (now a subsidiary of SAIC), to operate and maintain the 511 Transit Web site and trip planner at www.transit.511.org, as well as the data collection, storage and maintenance for transit service data for all participating Bay Area transit agencies.

511 TakeTransit Trip PlannerSM Replacement

As described at the previous presentation to EDAC by MTC staff in January, the transit trip planner currently in use on 511 Transit is obsolete and no longer supported by its developer. In order to find the most up-to-date technology to replace the existing trip planner, the quality of new trip planner software features and functions were evaluated based on the needs of the public, transit agencies and MTC. Factors evaluated included cost, adaptability to the 511 Transit Web site, timeline for implementation, risk considerations, and reputation of products and options.

After a comprehensive review of options, MTC's contractor recommended selection of a commercial "off the shelf" trip planner. The trip planner selected is used in London, in many European countries, in Melbourne, Australia, and also soon to be launched by Chicago Regional Transit Authority. MTC approved this trip planner replacement recommendation in

early 2007, and has been working since then to adapt the trip planner software to MTC's Regional Transit Database and 511 Transit's Web site revision.

511 Transit Web Site Update

In response to requests from the public for improved features, the 511 Transit project reviewed newer technologies that are currently being adapted by transit information Web sites around the world. As a result, MTC has developed a redesign for the new Transit Web site that uses the newer, more complex technology for the general public, which incorporates the new trip planner. The effort will be launched in mid-May 2008 as a new beta site. A short demonstration of this new Web site will be presented at the EDAC meeting.

During the review mentioned above, it became apparent that many of the latest and more useful improvements in Web site usability and interactive mapping that the 511 Transit Web site customers have been requesting are not fully adaptable to screen reader technology with its current capabilities. MTC is now beginning to develop a version of the new trip planner that will be fully screen reader accessible. When completed, this will enable the 511 Web site to continue to offer and maintain a second, screen reader accessible version of the 511 Transit Web site and trip planner that does not have all the complexity of the main public site's redesign. This work is being undertaken with an accessibility consultant who will be advising MTC, and will be reviewed and discussed as part of an EDAC technical working group starting in May.

The Accessible trip planner and Web site to be released in July will be a revision to the current 511 Transit Web site. In the meantime, the current Web site and trip planner will remain live, in parallel with the May release of the new beta website that does not have full screen reader capabilities.

Again, MTC staff will be at your May 1 meeting to update you on progress on the replacement trip planner and Web site, and to receive your input.